

Independent Voter Participation in Open, Partisan Primaries State Comparison

1. Massachusetts- Unaffiliated voters are allowed to vote on either party's ballot in the primary election and remain unaffiliated. Party members must vote on their party's ballot. Voter registration closes 20 days before the primary election.
2. Iowa- Voters must be registered with a party in order to vote in a primary or caucus, but voters are allowed to change affiliation before the primary election or at the polls on primary day. Iowa offers same day registration.
3. Maine- Voters must affiliate with a party in order to vote in that party's primary. However, there is no deadline for in-person registration. Maine also offers same-day registration at the polls. Voters who have already registered but have not enrolled in a party may affiliate with a party at the polls. Any affiliated voter who wishes to change party enrollment must do so at least 15 days before the vote. A voter may change party enrollment again after 3 months from the date on which the voter last changed parties. Mail-in voter registration closes 21 days before primary.
4. New Hampshire- Voters must affiliate with a party to participate in the primary, even if it is temporary. An unaffiliated voter must choose one party's ballot, which makes them a registered member of that party. However, temporary affiliation is possible, as voters can fill out a card at the polling place to return to undeclared status after the vote is cast. For this reason, New Hampshire allows same day registration for unaffiliated voters.
5. Rhode Island- Unaffiliated voters may participate in one party's primary, but this choice makes them registered members of that party. In order to disaffiliate, the voter must file a "Change of Party Designation" form. The change takes 90 days to go into effect, but a voter can submit the form at the polling place after casting their vote. Voter registration closes 30 days before the primary election.
6. Texas, Georgia, and Alabama- Voters are only held to party affiliation in the party's primary they voted in in the event of a runoff for that election cycle. (In Texas, only Democrats are held to that affiliation)
7. South Carolina- Voters do not declare affiliation with a party in order to vote, but must choose one party's ballot. Voter registration closes 30 days before primary.
8. Colorado- Voters do not have to declare affiliation with a party in order to vote in a primary, but they must choose one party's ballot.